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HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
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THE
ANTIGONE OF SOPHOCLES

TRANSLATED
WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

GEORGE HERBERT PALMER
ALFORD PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN HARVARD UNIVERSITY



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σοὶ ταῦτα χαιρούσῃ καλῶς ἄρχει κόρη
ἦν δὲ γυναικὶ συμφιλεῖν πεπεισμένη.

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

I

THE TRANSLATION

IN putting forth this ancient masterpiece in an English dress, I wish to assert for my rendering the least possible originality. Sophocles I hope has furnished all its ideas, and a large part of its language has been borrowed from previous workmen. The piece has been loved for ages, and every illumination which affection, learning, and ingenious phrase can give has long been bestowed upon it. The new translator, unless he cares for himself more than for the heroic maid, must make it his chief business to sort the stores already accumulated. He should remember, however, that good literary sorting can be performed in no mechanical fashion. It is constructive work and calls for creative imagination. Situations must be felt, characters conceived, the mode of utterance which suits the individual persons, and suits their passing feeling, be delicately measured, before any selection of verbal

material, whether furnished by one's own mind or that of others, can be sanctioned. This need is apt to be overlooked, even by many who are not so ready as I to indulge in plagiarism. The translator of the *Antigone* is the manager of a dramatic action. If he cannot make the appealing play appeal, it is inapposite to say that his words fit much else in the Greek text. In the mind of Sophocles all else existed for the sake of presenting human character; and when this all-controlling interest is omitted, the ministering niceties of language become pedantic monstrosities.

What has disturbed me, however, more than my borrowings is the gradually formed conviction that many of these niceties must be sacrificed if I would be true to the dramatic purpose. The style of Sophocles is peculiar. On the one hand, and so far as structure is concerned, it is preëminently classic. When we think of Greek style as statuesque, we really have Sophocles in mind; for to no other Greek writer did proportion, restraint, relation of parts, rounded completeness, appeal as to him. "He saw life steadily and saw it whole." Every scene, incident, character, trait, utterance, aphorism, is considered with reference to all the rest, and

appears on the page at the bidding of the subject rather than through any arbitrary command of the writer. The impression of unity conveyed by one of his plays is prodigious. Probably no other dramatist in any age has been able to move a tragedy forward with such unswerving ethical relentlessness. On this account it is the more important to call attention to certain other characteristics of the style of Sophocles which are not usually associated with those just mentioned. For within the large limits of solid form he is minutely psychological and introspective. His mind plays with itself, delighting in complexity and indirection. He loves allusion, antithesis, verbal similarity, avoids simple and rationalized constructions, and often throws his sentences out of joint by experimenting with novel modes of expression. The associations of certain words are dear to him, and like every true poet he prizes the penumbra of his speech as much as its immediate radiance. Living as he did at a time of mental crisis, when his people were awaking to a new species of self-consciousness, he bears its impress and offers in his intricate style an instructive contrast to the unclouded simplicities of Homer.

It is obvious that the attempt to present such

a writer in natural language other than his own will involve a sacrifice of much that is characteristic of him. Only a person fashioned again by such a race, time, and temperament as was his could be great enough to hold the large outline firm, while still filling it with intricate psychologic detail. The translator who will render as much as is permitted to ordinary powers is wise in deciding which of the two elements he will subordinate and which put uppermost. Shall he fix his reader's mind on the sweep of the tragedy, or on its wealthy, wayward, and subtle verbalities? The two are incompatible, at least for us interpreters of middling powers. The translator who lends an equal ear to both is lost. I have sacrificed the latter — the intricacies, the allusions, the seducing associations. It would be a sound objection to my rendering to say that I have thinned out Sophocles, have made him more orderly, clear and swift than he properly should be. Regretfully I have done this, knowing well how the scholar will complain; but I long to make a lodgment of the mighty action in the English mind, and only fear I have still retained more matters of antiquity than will allow our moderns easily to see the vision I have seen.

The medium employed is that which I used many years ago in rendering the *Odyssey*, — an unobtrusive iambic rhythm, not broken by measure. I thought it suited Homer well, but I fear it is too simple a contrivance to express the full and complex mind of Sophocles. But since fulness has not been my principal aim, the enginery to which my mind is already accustomed may be permissible. My very plan obliges me to keep clear of all refinements of verse structure, to fix attention on reported facts, and at the same time to suggest to the ear that we are traversing a region of poetry and not of prose. For such ends my rhythmic chant may be found not ill adapted. In choric passages, following the analogy of the Greek, I have admitted greater syntactical license, and have sometimes employed language rather for purposes of emotion and suggestion than as the means of specific statement. Throughout the dialogue, wishing to emphasize the veracity of the play, I have employed the familiar “you,” instead of the literary “thou.” And I hope the English reader, unacquainted with the structure of a Greek play, will be able more readily to follow its developing action when aided by the titles which I have ventured to put upon the several choruses and episodes. The text adopted is substantially that of Jebb.

II

THE CHORUS

MODERN Western tragedy works its effects by three agencies — speech, action, and scenery. Ancient Greek tragedy employed three more — worship, song with its accompanying dance movement, and the organized judgment of the spectators. Though one of the last three occasionally appears in a modern play, it is accidental and without effect on the main movement. On the Greek stage the whole triad is of the very essence of the play. With it tragedy begins, by it the single piece is built and parcelled, and in it is summed up whatever significance the drama is intended to convey. The ingenious instrument by which these surplus elements are introduced, and are brought to a unity more compact than our simpler construction attains, is the Chorus. This is the formative feature of a Greek play. The represented characters are its adjuncts. An English reader who will enjoy the *Antigone* must be asked to adjust his mind to these strange conditions.

For Greek tragedy is primarily and by virtue of its origin the worship of Bacchus; not the loose god of the vintage, — he presides over comedy, — but the mysterious and exalted being, associated with Demeter and Apollo, who animates all things and is looked up to by the serious and afflicted as their hope in times of need. Bacchus, Iacchus, or Dionysus, a god of many names, exhibits in personal form the living principle of nature. The sad and rejoicing vicissitudes of the seasons have always been recognized as expressing a tragedy in which divine life is continually overthrown and continually triumphant. Accordingly, during an epoch when from many causes mysterious suggestions of eternal life pressed with peculiar force upon the Greek mind, the beginnings of tragedy appear in connection with the rapidly extending cult of Dionysus. In earliest Spring, when flowers are first struggling into life, songs began to be sung to Dionysus which passionately identified the feelings of his worshippers with the tragic experiences of the god. Comedy originated in village merry-makings; tragedy was rooted in worship.

By degrees these sacred songs were accompanied with snatches of story from the meaning-

ful myth of Dionysus, then from the myths of other gods and heroes. But even after narrative was admitted, song still remained important. The lyric element retreated but little as the dramatic advanced. Through all the changes of later times, the Chorus — a band of singers usually represented as a conservative company, deeply imbued with religious feeling, and often massively summarizing those estimates which sober spectators might be supposed to pass on the represented situation — played in reality the chief rôle in Greek tragedy. Even in our day, though no longer dominating the stage, the Chorus has not altogether perished. Echoes of it resound in the modern oratorio. Successful reproductions of it appear in Milton's "Samson Agonistes," in Swinburne's "Atalanta in Calydon," and especially in Fitzgerald's "Agamemnon." An interesting adaptation of it to romantic purposes may be seen in Matthew Arnold's "Tristram and Iseult."

The local position assigned the Chorus in the fixed arrangements of the ancient theatre well symbolizes its dramatic position. It moves about the incense altar in the circular space midway between actors and audience, and directly in front of the priest of Dionysus. In

the time of Sophocles it consisted of fifteen persons, but through its leader spoke as one man and often took part in the dramatic dialogue. Though multifold, it presents a single character no less than the other actors. In the *Electra* it is a company of maidens, in the *Ajax* a crew of sailors, in the *Antigone* a group of aged Thebans. Singing and with measured steps, like some stately ballet, it makes its entrance, or *Parodos*, into the Orchestra, where its standing songs, or *Stasima*, are sung. These are diversified and rendered more picturesque by animated gesture, solemn evolution, and dance-like movement. At the close of the piece — *Exodos* — it withdraws, while its leader in a few stately sentences utters the feelings now properly present in the minds of all.

The dialogue of a Greek play, accordingly, does not, like our own, fall into formal Acts, but stages of the dramatic action — somewhat analogous to Acts or Scenes — are marked off by the lyric interventions of the Chorus. Such sections of the story are called Episodes, a word originally signifying interludes, passages by the way, parenthetical matter between the great songs. At the opening of the play the Chorus does not usually appear, but in an intro-

ductory section, or Prologue, one or more actors set forth the situation and announce the theme on which the coming catastrophe turns. When the Prologue is ended, the Chorus enters; and in the subsequent series of Episodes and Choruses the story is unfolded. But the action is not allowed to terminate, as with us, in a crisis. Greek taste found a climactic ending violent, barbarous, and incomplete. Moral consequences must be traced, a place for repentance be provided, the strenuous tumult of tragedy be allayed, the voice of eternal things be heard, before that purification of passion could occur which Aristotle and his countrymen thought the end of tragedy.

III

THE LEGEND

THE number of subjects in Greek tragedy is small. Romantic love, the motive power of the modern stage, can hardly be counted among them; for love when it appears at all, as in the *Antigone*, is usually a subordinate passion. The great forces of the Greek drama are of a different order — enmities, ambitions, hereditary evil, the struggle of man with circumstance, the vindication of some righteous principle, the disproportionate and blind will of the sinner. These are the favorite themes of the Greek tragedians. Such subjects they find best embodied in a few tremendous legends, from which they refine away the early barbarism and which they endow with deep ethical significance. To these they return again and again, apparently loving best the stories which have been told oftenest. They no more tire of “presenting Thebes and Pelops’ line, and the tale of Troy divine” than did the age of chivalry of telling

tales of King Arthur. The repeated use of a small number of subjects, readjusted with a certain audacity and with characters recreated to fit diverse purposes, is certainly favorable to finished excellence. And it must be remembered, too, that a play which had for audience an entire city, instead of the select company usual in our time, gained in ease of appeal when founded on a story already tolerably familiar. The vast legend of Thebes, of which the death of Antigone forms the concluding section, has been repeatedly handled by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. That part which is essential for the understanding of the present play runs as follows : —

In the Boeotian city of Thebes, originally founded by Cadmus and ever watched over by Bacchus, the child of its princess Semele, ruled Laius, son of Labdacus, and his wife Jocasta. At his marriage, an oracle warned Laius not to beget a child, since any son of his would be certain to kill him. A son was born, however. Its parents bound it hand and foot and consigned it to a slave to be cast out on Mt. Cithaeron. The slave gave it to a Corinthian herdsman, who in turn carried it to King Polybus in Corinth. Polybus brought up the boy

among his own children and named him Oedipus, or Swellfoot, from the marks left by the binding thongs upon his feet. One day at a feast a drunken comrade jested on the uncertain parentage of Oedipus, and so excited his angry curiosity that, failing to obtain satisfaction from the King, he went to Delphi and demanded of the oracle his father's name. It was not told him, but instead he was warned that if he returned to his country he should kill his father and marry his mother. Turning away, therefore, from Corinth, he travelled toward Thebes. At the pass where the roads to Corinth and to Thebes divide, he met an old man riding in a chariot. The way was narrow, the driver surly. A quarrel arose. Oedipus struck one of the strangers, but was himself struck by the old man while forcing his way past the chariot. Enraged, he dealt about him such stout blows with his walking-stick that only one man, an attendant, escaped alive to report that all the rest of the band had been overpowered by robbers. The old man was Laius, the father of Oedipus.

When Oedipus reached Thebes he found Creon, the brother of Jocasta, ruling the city. All within was confusion. The violent death of Laius had been reported, and — worse still — a

INTRODUCTION

semi-human monster, the Sphinx, from her lair on a neighboring hill had been seizing all travellers, propounding to them her riddle, and, when they failed to solve it, devouring them. In despair Creon had publicly announced that whoever should free the city, by solving the riddle, should be made its king and the husband of the widowed Jocasta. When Oedipus appeared, the Sphinx, as usual, bade him name the creature which successively walks on four legs, on two legs, and on three legs. Oedipus answered "Man," and the defeated Sphinx cast herself down the precipice.

So the city was saved, Oedipus became its king, and his mother his wife. Two sons, Polynices and Eteocles, and two daughters, Antigone and Ismene, were born to him. But blight and pestilence fell upon the land. To ascertain the cause, Oedipus sent Creon to Delphi to consult the oracle once more, and learned that the land could never prosper till the slayer of Laius should be found and banished. The detection of this unknown slayer forms the subject of Sophocles' play "King Oedipus." At last when through a maze of misunderstandings the persistent king brings to light his own unintended misdeeds, Jocasta hangs herself, and

Oedipus, tearing out his eyes, begs that the oracle be fulfilled by his own banishment. Attended by Antigone, and afterwards joined by Ismene, he wanders to Colonus, a sacred spot near Athens, and there dies. The events of his exile are reported in Sophocles' "Oedipus at Colonus."

Just before the death of Oedipus, his son Polynices had come to Colonus and reported fresh disasters at Thebes. The two brothers had agreed to hold the kingship in alternate years; but at the close of his own first term Eteocles had refused to retire and had banished his brother. Polynices had gone to Argos, to King Adrastus, whose daughter he had married, had there persuaded seven chieftains to join him, and with them now proposed to vindicate his rights by besieging his native city. The sisters, Antigone and Ismene, had already returned to Thebes and were in the city when Polynices and his army appeared. The attempt at storming, described in the first chorus of the *Antigone*, proved unsuccessful. A combat between the two brothers followed. Both fell, Creon assumed the kingship, and in the night preceding the opening of the play the Argive army fled in confusion away.

This is the grim story, a story as blind

and bloody as that from which in our time Browning distilled the splendid poetry of "The Ring and the Book." Its horrors reach their height in the special subject of the present play, the indignities offered to a dead body. All the material of the tale is savage, extravagant, fortuitous, bearing the marks of popular legend. Possibly it represents some distant event; an event very distant, however. For the chief incidents in the life of Oedipus are told by Homer, in the eleventh book of the *Odyssey*. But around any historical centre which the tale may possess has evidently gathered a mass of such imaginative terrors as is natural to a child-like and half-moralized age, perplexed over the impotence of purposive man. The Greek dramatists have known how to adjust the whole chaotic legend to the requirements of ethical beauty, and through repeated trials to fashion from it a series of tragedies profoundly significant of human life. Especially has Sophocles in the portion here presented brought the afflictive and fatalistic elements of the story into such exquisite balance with the heroic and intentional as most fully to hold the reader's interest, admiration, and awe.

THE PLAY

THE PERSONS

CREON, King of Thebes.

EURYDICE, his wife.

HAEMON, his son, betrothed to Antigone.

ANTIGONE, } his nieces, daughters of Oedipus and Jocasta,
ISMENE, } former King and Queen of Thebes.

TIRESIAS, an aged blind seer.

WATCHMAN.

MESSENGER.

SECOND MESSENGER.

BOY AND GUARDS, silent persons.

CHORUS OF THEBAN ELDERS.

The Scene throughout is at Thebes, in front of the palace.
The Play begins at daybreak.

ANTIGONE

Prologue

ANTIGONE

Ismene, my own sister, of all the woes begun in Oedipus can you imagine any that Zeus will not complete within our lives? There is no grief or crime, no degradation or dishonor, not to be found among the woes of you and me. And what is this new edict issued lately by our captain, people say, to the whole city? Do you know, and did you hear? Or have you failed to learn how on our friends fall evils from our foes?

ISMENE

To me, Antigone, have come no tidings of our friends, for good or ill, since we two lost two brothers, slain in mutual strife the selfsame day. I know the Argive host retreated this last night, but I know nothing further — whether we gain or lose.

ANTIGONE

I guessed as much, and therefore brought you here alone outside the gate to learn the truth.

double title! — with twisted cord ended her life in shame. A third disaster came. Our pair of brothers in a single day, like wretched suicides, wrought out one common ruin by each other's hand. And now once more, when we are the only ones still left, think what a far worse fate we two shall meet if we, defying law, transgress our rulers' will and power. Nay, rather let us bear in mind that we are women, so not fit to strive with men. Moreover, since we are the subjects of those stronger than ourselves, we must obey these orders and orders harsher still. I, then, beseeching those beneath the earth to grant me pardon, seeing I am compelled, will bow to those in power. To act beyond one's sphere shows little wisdom.

ANTIGONE

I will not urge you. No! Nor if hereafter you desire, shall you with my consent give any aid. Be what you will, and I will bury him. Good it would be to die in doing so. Dearly shall I lie with him, with my dear, after my pious sin. And longer must I satisfy those there below than people here, for there I shall lie ever. But you, if you think well, keep disregarding what the gods regard!

ISMENE

I mean no disregard. But to defy the State
— it is not in me.

ANTIGONE

Make that, then, your excuse! I will go raise
a grave over my dearest brother.

ISMENE

O my poor sister, how I fear for you!

ANTIGONE

Be not disturbed for me. Let your own
course be true.

ISMENE

At least do not reveal what you have done.
Keep it a secret. I will hide it too.

ANTIGONE

Ha? Speak it out! Far more my enemy if
silent than if telling it to all!

ISMENE

Hot heart and chilling deeds!

ANTIGONE

I know I please those I most ought to please.

ISMENE

If you succeed. But you desire what cannot be.

ANTIGONE

Why, then, when strength shall fail me, I will cease.

ISMENE

Best not pursue at all what cannot be.

ANTIGONE

Speak thus, and I shall hate you. And he who died will hate you, — rightly too. Nay, leave me and my rash design to meet our doom, for I shall meet none equal to not dying nobly.

ISMENE

Go, then, if go you must. And yet of this be sure, that mad as is your going, dearly are you loved by those you love. [*Exeunt.*

Chorus I

Entrance song. The triumph of Thebes

CHORUS

Beams of the sun, more beautifully shining on seven-gated Thebes than ever light before, —

thou hast appeared at last, thou eye of golden day, rising above the streams of Dircé. And that white-shielded warrior who came from Argos in full array thou hast sent back in headlong flight with a more urgent rein.

Impelled against our land by the vexed claims of Polynices, he hovered o'er the land like a shrill-screaming eagle, in snow-white plumage decked, begirt with many spears and bristling helmets.

Pausing above our roofs and gaping with murderous fangs upon our seven-fold entrance, away he went before our blood had filled his jaws, before our circling towers his pine-blaze caught; so loudly at his back was raised the martial din, hard matter for our dragon foe to face.

The loud tongue's boasts Zeus utterly abhors. And watching the army flowing in full stream onward, proud of its clanking gold, with a blazing bolt he strikes the foe who, at our topmost rampart now, pressed on to shout out victory.

Thrown back to the repelling earth that fire-bringer fell, he who so lately, careering in mad onset, puffed blasts of stormy hate. So stood things there. Elsewhere a different portion dealt great battering Ares, our strong aid.

For seven captains at our seven gates, matched equals against equals, left behind to Zeus, the lord of battles, tribute of brazen arms; all save the wrathful pair who of one father, of one mother born, levelled at one another doubly victorious spears and shared one common death.

But since resounding victory has come and brought a greeting to our charioted Thebes, over the wars now closed draw a forgetfulness, and to all temples of the gods let us repair with dances all night long; and he who makes Thebes reel, Bacchus, shall lead us.

But lo! our country's king, Creon, Menoeceus' son — newly our king through these new mercies of the gods — approaches, meditating what design, in that he fixed this special conference of elders here and summoned us by a wide proclamation? [*Enter* CREON.]

Episode I

Creon

CREON

Sirs, our city's welfare, though shaken in a heavy surge, the gods have safely righted. Therefore by mandate I have brought you

hither, parted from all the rest, because I know full well how in the time of Laius you steadily respected the power of the throne. So also in the days when Oedipus upheld the State. And even when he fell, you stood around the children of his house with faithful hearts. Since, then, these two have fallen in one day by double doom, smiting and smitten in their own hand's guilt, I take possession of all power and of the throne through being next of kin to the two dead.

It is impossible fully to learn what a man is in heart and mind and judgment until he proves himself by test of office and of laws. For to my thinking he who ordering a great state catches at plans not through their being best, and then through fear holds his lips locked, appears and ever has appeared most base. Him who regards his friend more than his land I count no man at all. I therefore, — all-seeing Zeus bear witness! — never shall keep silence when I see woe coming on my citizens instead of weal. Nor would I ever make that man my friend who is my country's foe; because I know how it is she who saves us, and when we sail with her secure we find true friends.

Such are the principles by which I make this

city prosper. And in accord herewith I now have issued public edict touching the sons of Oedipus: ordering that Eteocles, who fell fighting for this city after winning all distinction with his spear, be laid within a grave and given whatever honors meet the brave dead below. But for his brother Polynices, who coming back from exile tried by fire utterly to destroy his native land and his ancestral gods, tried even to taste the blood of his own kin or force them into bondage — this man we have proclaimed throughout the city none shall honor with a grave and none lament, but that his corpse be left unburied, for the birds and dogs to eat, disgraced for all to see. Such is my will. Never by act of mine shall bad men have more honor than the just. But he who is well minded toward this state alike in life or death by me is honored.

CHÔRUS

Such is your pleasure, Creon, son of Menoeceus, both toward this city's foe and toward its friend. It lies within your power to take what course you will in dealing with the dead or us the living.

CREON

Be you observant, then, of these my orders.

CHORUS

Impose that task upon some younger man.

CREON

Nay, persons are provided to observe the body.

CHORUS

And what, then, have you further to command?

CREON

Not to give aid to those who disobey.

CHORUS

None is so simple as to wish to die.

CREON

And that shall be his doom. Yet through
vain hopes gain often proves men's ruin.

[Enter a watchman.]

WATCHMAN

My lord, I will not say that I stand breathless
here through any speed or briskly picking up
my heels, for many a halt I held in hesitation on
the road and often wheeled to right about. My
mind was talking hard and now would say,
“Fool, why go where when you come you will

be punished?" And now, "Wretch, loitering still? If Creon learns the news from some one else, how you will tingle then!" Debating thus, I hurried slowly on; and travelling so, short roads grow long. At last, however, coming to you here won the day; and little as I have to tell, I'll speak. For here I come clasping the hope that I may meet only what fate commands.

CREON

Why is it, then, you have so faint a heart?

WATCHMAN

I want to tell you first about myself. That thing — I did not do it, nor see the one who did, and so I cannot fairly come to any harm.

CREON

Your aim is careful. Well you hedge the matter round. Plainly you bring some news.

WATCHMAN

And bad news makes long pause.

CREON

Will you not speak at once and go your way?

WATCHMAN

I'm speaking now. That corpse — some one has lately buried it and gone, sprinkled dry dust over its flesh and done the fitting rites.

CREON

What can you mean? Who is this daring person?

WATCHMAN

I do not know. For at the place there was no pickaxe mark nor mattock dirt, only the hard bare ground, unbroken, wheel-tracks none, no sign of any doer. And when the first day-watch reported, sore amazement fell on all; for it had disappeared, not in a grave, but thin dust scattered over, as if one shunned a curse. There were no signs that dog or beast had come and dragged it. Then bitter words hummed to and fro, guard cursing guard, and finally blows would have followed, none to hinder. For each man was the doer, no one sure, and all denied all knowledge. We were prepared to take hot iron in our hands, to walk through fire, and swear by every god we had not done it nor knew who plotted or performed the deed.

At last, when nothing further came of questions, some one spoke and made us turn our

faces to the ground in fear. We could not answer, nor if we did as he advised could we be safe. He urged the matter should be brought to you, not kept concealed. His counsel carried, and the lot selected luckless me to have the honor. So here I am against my will, and your will too. That I know well. Nobody loves the bearer of bad news.

CHORUS

Hear me, my lord. May this have been some dispensation of the gods? For so my conscience long has hinted.

CREON

Be still, before you fill me full of anger with your talk and you be proved a fool, old though you are! Intolerably you talk in saying gods extend a care to such a corpse as this. Was it to show high honor to a benefactor they gave him burial who came to burn their pillared shrines and votive treasures, and overturn their land and laws? Or do you find that gods approve the wicked? It cannot be.

But this it is: from time to time within the city ill-affected persons have been murmuring at me, wagging their heads in secret, not in

loyalty bearing my yoke upon their necks as if they loved me. Through such men, I know well, the watchmen have been bribed to do this thing. Never an institution has sprung up among mankind more ruinous than money. This lays cities low, removes men from their homes, trains and misleads good souls to turn to ill, instructs men how to play the villain and find a vice for every act.

But they whom pay has prompted here made certain soon or late of being punished. Nay, if Zeus still has honor at my hand, be sure of this, — for with an oath I speak — unless you find the author of this burial and produce him here before my eyes, mere death shall not suffice, but hung up living, you shall confess the crime and learn whence gain is to be had, so as to seek it there in future and to understand that not from every source is gain to be desired. For from base gettings you will find more people cursed than bettered.

WATCHMAN

May I reply, or shall I turn and go?

CREON

Do you not see that even now your words offend?

WATCHMAN

And do they sting the ear or sting the heart?

CREON

Why should you mark where my displeasure lies?

WATCHMAN

The doer offends the mind, I but the ear.

CREON

Pah! What an outright chatterbox you are!

WATCHMAN

At any rate, I never did this deed.

CREON

This very deed, and staked your life for money.

WATCHMAN

Well, well! Pity a judge should ever wrongly judge.

CREON

Prate on, then, about judgment! But if you do not bring to light the men who did these deeds, you shall at least acknowledge that guilty gains work harm.

WATCHMAN

With all my heart I hope he may be found.
But found or not — and fortune settles that —
you will not catch me coming here again. For
this time, saved beyond my hope and thought,
I owe the gods large thanks. [*Exit.*

*Chorus II**The Might of Man*

CHORUS

Much is there marvellous, but naught more
marvellous than man. Over the foaming sea
in winter's wind he goes, moving among the
waves that roar around. That greatest of the
gods, the everlasting and unwearied earth, he
wears away, wheeling his ploughshare through
it year by year, forcing the mule to trace his
furrow.

The flocks of nimble birds he snares and
makes his prey, the herds of savage beasts, and
ocean's watery spawn, with netted coils — this
ever crafty man. He masters by his arts the
creatures of the fields and of the hills. He
brings the stiff-maned horse under his binding
yoke, and stubborn mountain bull.

WATCHMAN

And do they sting the ear or sting the heart?

CREON

Why should you mark where my displeasure lies?

WATCHMAN

The doer offends the mind, I but the ear.

CREON

Pah! What an outright chatterbox you are!

WATCHMAN

At any rate, I never did this deed.

CREON

This very deed, and staked your life for money.

WATCHMAN

Well, well! Pity a judge should ever wrongly judge.

CREON

Prate on, then, about judgment! But if you do not bring to light the men who did these deeds, you shall at least acknowledge that guilty gains work harm.

WATCHMAN

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But found or not — and fortune settles that —
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ever crafty man. He masters by his arts the
creatures of the fields and of the hills. He
brings the stiff-maned horse under his binding
yoke, and stubborn mountain bull.

Speech, too, and wind-swift thought, and social dispositions, these he learned; how to avoid uncomfortable frosts when skies are clear, and storms when skies are foul — resourceful ever. Without resource he meets no dawning day. From death alone he shall not win release, although for fell disease he has discovered cures.

So with a subtle ingenuity of skill, beyond all reckoning, now he turns toward evil, now toward good. Honoring his country's laws and the gods' plighted justice, high in the State he stands. No State has he with whom dishonor dwells by reason of his crimes. May he not share my hearth or think my thoughts who does such deeds of sin.

At this portentous sight I am amazed. How can I look and not confess that this is the maid Antigone? Ah, hapless one! Child of a hapless father too, of Oedipus! But what? They do not bring you here defiant of the king's decrees and caught in folly?

[Enter watchman, leading ANTIGONE.]

*Episode II**Antigone*

WATCHMAN

Here is the one who did the burying. We caught her in the act. But where is Creon?

CHORUS

Forth from his house he comes, and just at need.

CREON

What is it then? With what occasion does my coming fit?

WATCHMAN

My lord, men should not swear not to do anything. For second thoughts belie resolve. I would have vowed I should not soon be here, after the threats with which I had been stormed. But since a joy outside and past all expectation is like no other pleasure in degree, I do now come—in breach of vows—bringing this maid, caught honoring the dead with burial. No casting lots for this. The luck belonged to me and no one else this time. So now, my lord, take her and try her as you will, and give her sen-

tence. But let me claim a quittance from all harm.

CREON

You bring this person here, taking her how and where?

WATCHMAN

Burying the man. You know the whole.

CREON

Do you understand and mean precisely what you say?

WATCHMAN

I saw this woman burying the body you forbade. There, do I speak plainly and clearly now?

CREON

And how was she discovered? And when detected, taken?

WATCHMAN

This is the way it happened. When we arrived there, threatened so terribly by you, we swept off all the dust that hid the corpse, and laid the clammy body altogether bare, and then sat down below the hilltop well to windward, retiring where no smell from it could strike. Sharply each stirred his neighbor, bad words

flying to and fro, to keep the men from shirking duty. For some time this went on, until the sun's bright disk stood in mid heaven and there was burning heat. Then suddenly a whirlwind, raising an eddy from the ground that blurred the sky, covers the plain, tattering all the foliage of its trees, and the whole air was choked.

With close-shut eyes we bore that visitation of the gods; and when after a while it passed away, this maid appeared. She uttered a shrill cry, like some sad bird which sees the bed of its empty nest stripped of its young. So she, when she perceived the body bare, broke into lamentation, fiercely cursing those who did the deed. Straight in her hands she brings dry dust and, raising her shapely jar of bronze, with three libations crowns the dead. At that sight we gave chase and quickly caught our game, for she was nothing daunted. And with the past and present acts we charged her. She denied nothing — to my delight and to my pain as well. For getting clear of ills is most delightful, but bringing friends to ill gives pain. However, to count such matters less than my own safety — that's my way.

CREON

You there, now turning to the ground your face, do you acknowledge or deny you did this thing?

ANTIGONE

I say I did it. I deny not that I did.

CREON

(*To Watchman.*) Then go your way, clear of a heavy charge. [*Exit.*] (*To Antigone.*) Tell me, not at full length but briefly, did you know my edict against doing this?

ANTIGONE

I did. How could I help it? It was plain.

CREON

Yet you presumed to transgress laws?

ANTIGONE

Yes, for it was not Zeus who gave this edict; nor yet did Justice, dwelling with the gods below, make for men laws like these. I did not think such force was in your edicts that the unwritten and unchanging laws of God you, a mere man, could traverse. These are not matters of to-day or yesterday, but are from everlasting.

No man can tell at what time they appeared. In view of them I would not, through fear of human will, meet judgment from the gods. That I shall die, I knew, — how fail to know it? — though you had never made an edict. And if before my time I die, I count it gain. For he who lives like me in many woes, how can he fail to find in death a gain? So then for me to meet this doom is not a grief at all. But when my mother's child had died if I had kept his corpse unburied, then I should have grieved. For this I do not grieve. And if I seem to you to have been working folly, it may be he who charges folly is the fool.

CHORUS

Plain is the headstrong temper of this child of headstrong father. She knows not how to bend in times of ill.

CREON

Yet know that spirits very stiff may soonest fail. The strongest iron, baked in the fire overhard, you may see oftenest snap and break. By a little bit, I find, high-mettled steeds are managed. There is no place for pride in one who is dependent. She first set out in crime when she transgressed the established laws; and after that comes further crime in boasting here, laughing at

having done so. I am no longer man, she is the man, if such power rests in her unchallenged. Be she my sister's child, or closer to my blood than all who bow before our household Zeus, she and her kin shall not escape the direst doom.

Yes, for I count her sister an equal plotter of this burial. Summon her hither! Even now I saw her in the house raving and uncontrolled. It often happens that the stealthy heart is caught before the act, when in the dark men fashion crooked deeds. But it is hateful, too, when one found out in wrong will give his guilt fine names.

ANTIGONE

Do you desire more than having caught to kill me?

CREON

No, nothing. Having that, I have the whole.

ANTIGONE

Then why delay? For nothing in your words can give me pleasure — and may they never please! So also you mine naturally displease. Yet how could I have gained glory more glorious than by now laying my own brother in the grave? All here would speak approval, did not

terror seal their lips. Rulers, so fortunate in much besides, have this advantage too — that they can do and say whatever they may please.

CREON

Of all the race of Cadmus you alone see it so.

ANTIGONE

These also do, but curb their tongues through fear of you.

CREON

And are you not ashamed to act so unlike them?

ANTIGONE

'T is no disgrace to honor one's own kin.

CREON

Was not he also of your blood who fell, his rival?

ANTIGONE

Mine, by one mother and one father too.

CREON

Why then pay honors which dishonor him?

ANTIGONE

He who is dead would not describe it so.

CREON

Yes, if you give like honor to his impious foe.

ANTIGONE

It was no slave who died. It was his brother.

CREON

Wasting the land. And he defending it.

ANTIGONE

But these are rites called for by Death itself.

CREON

The good and bad should not be like in lot.

ANTIGONE

Who knows if that is piety below?

CREON

A hated man is not beloved, though dead.

ANTIGONE

I take no part in hate. 'T is mine to love.

CREON

Down to the grave, then, if you needs must love, and love those there! But while I live, no woman masters me.

CHORUS

Lo, forth from the door Ismene comes, like a fond sister, shedding tears. A cloud upon her brow mars the flushed face and moistens the fair cheek.

[*Enter ISMENE.*

CREON

Ah, you that lurking like a viper in my house secretly sucked my blood, while I was unaware of rearing thus two fiends, subverters of my throne — come, speak! Will you confess your share in burying this body, or swear that you knew nothing?

ISMENE

I did the deed, — that is, if she assents. I take my share and burden of the blame.

ANTIGONE

No, justice will not let you. You did not wish, nor I permit you, to take part.

ISMENE

But I should be ashamed if in this time of trouble I did not make myself the sharer of your doom.

ANTIGONE

Whose the deed was, the Grave and those within it know. A friend in words is not the friend I love.

ISMENE

Ah, sister, do not scorn my dying with you, honoring the dead.

ANTIGONE

No, do not die with me, nor make your own something you had no hand in. I am enough to die.

ISMENE

What good is life to me deprived of you?

ANTIGONE

Ask Creon. He is all your care.

ISMENE

How can it profit you to pain me so?

ANTIGONE

In grief myself, I make my mock at you.

ISMENE

How can I help you further, then, even now?

ANTIGONE

Look to yourself, I envy not your safety.

ISMENE

Alas, poor me! And I must miss your doom?

ANTIGONE

Yes, for you chose to live, and I to die.

ISMENE

But not through anything I left unsaid.

ANTIGONE

And you seemed highly wise to some, and I to others.

ISMENE

But now the fault is shared.

ANTIGONE

Take heart. You live. My life went long ago in succoring the dead.

CREON

A pair of maids, I think, of whom the one seems destitute of reason now, the other since the first day she was born.

ISMENE

Nay, nay, my lord! However reason starts, it stays not in distress but goes astray. /

CREON

In your case, choosing vile deeds with the vile.

ISMENE

How could I live alone, parted from her?

CREON

Do not say "her." For she exists no more.

ISMENE

What! Will you slay your own son's promised bride?

CREON

Yes. There are other fields for him to plough.

ISMENE

But not such fitness as 'twixt him and her.

CREON

Bad-hearted wives I like not for my sons.

ANTIGONE

O dearest Haemon! How your father wrongs you!

CREON

You and your marriage vex me sorely.

CHORUS

And will you separate your son and her?

CREON

It is the Grave shall stop their wedding.

CHORUS

'T is clear, it seems, that she must die.

CREON

Clear both to you and me. No more delays!
Take them within, my slaves. Henceforth they
must be women, not left to roam at large. Even
bold natures shrink when at the last they see
death pressing life. [*Exeunt ANTIGONE and ISMENE.*]

Chorus III

The perpetuity of evil

CHORUS

Blessed are they whose years have never
tasted sorrow. For when a house has once been
shaken by the gods, to the calamity there is no
end, but on it goes throughout a multitude of
generations; even as the salt sea wave, which
traverses the darkness of the deep under wild
Thracian winds, rolls from its depths black
storm-tossed sand, and gloomily the smitten
crags resound.

From of old I see woes of the family of Labdacus heaped upon woes of men already gone. Generation clears not generation. It is a god that smites, and there is no release. Even now on the last offshoot of the house of Oedipus there fell a gleam. And yet again the deadly sickle of the nether gods cuts all away, through folly of speech and craziness of mind.

Ah, Zeus, what confidence of man can stay thy power?—that power which sleep affects not, though it makes all things old, nor yet the gods' unceasing seasons. But strong through time, which never makes thee old, thou inhabitest the radiant splendor of Olympus. For present, future, past, this law holds good: the Overmuch enters no life of man without disaster.

For a wide-ranging hope to many a man is gain; to many the deceitfulness of empty longing. It steals upon a man at unawares, till in the scorching flame he burns his foot. By one in wisdom was the famous saying uttered, "Evil seems ever good to him whose heart God leads to ruin." Brief too the time he spends before that ruin.

But here is Haemon, the youngest of your sons. Does he come grieving for the fate of his intended bride Antigone, vexed at his vanished nuptials?

[*Enter HAEMON.*

*Episode III**Haemon*

CREON

Soon we shall know, better than seers could say. My son, because you heard the immutable decree passed on your promised bride, you are not here incensed against your father? Are we not dear to you, do what we may?

HAEMON

My father, I am yours; and with just judgment you may direct, and I shall follow. No marriage shall be counted greater gain than your wise guidance.

CREON

Yes, so it should be settled in your heart, my son, always to take your stand behind your father's judgment. Therefore men pray to rear obedient children and to have them in their homes, to recompense the foe with ill and honor as their father does the friend. If one begets unprofitable children, what shall we say but that he breeds pains for himself, loud laughter for his foes? Do not, my son, at pleasure's bidding, give up your wits for any woman. But know embraces

soon grow cold when she who shares the home is false. What ulcer can be worse than the false friend? Then spurn the girl as if she were your foe, and let her seek a husband in the house of Hades. For having found her only, out of all the State, openly disobedient, recreant to that State I will not be, but I will have her life.

Let her appeal to Zeus, the god of kindred; but if I train my kin to be disorderly, I surely shall all those outside my kin. He who in private matters is a faithful man will prove himself upright in public too. But one who wantonly forces the law, and thinks to dictate to the rulers, wins no praise from me. No, whosoever is established by the State should be obeyed, in matters trivial and just or in their opposites. And the obedient man, I should be confident, would govern well and easily be governed, and posted in the storm of spears would hold his ground, a true and loyal comrade. Than lawlessness there is no greater ill. It ruins states, overturns homes, and joining with the spear-thrust breaks the ranks in rout. But in the steady lines what saves most lives is discipline. Therefore we must defend the public order and not at all subject it to a woman. Better be pushed

aside, if need be, by a man than to be known as women's subjects.

CHORUS

Unless through age we are at fault, you seem to say with reason what you say.

HAEMON

Father, the gods plant wisdom in mankind, which is of all possessions highest. In what respects you have not spoken rightly I cannot say, and may I never learn; and still it may be possible for some one else to be right too. I naturally watch in your behalf all that men do or say or find to blame. For your eye terrifies the common man and checks the words you might not wish to hear; but it is mine to hear things uttered in the dark. I know how the whole city mourns this maid, as one who of all women least deservedly for noblest deeds meets basest death. "She who, when her brother had fallen in the fight and lay unburied, did not leave him to be torn by savage dogs and birds, is she not worthy to receive some golden honor?" Such guarded talk runs covertly about.

For me, my father, nothing I possess is dearer than your welfare. For what can bring to children greater glory than a successful father's noble

name, or to a father than his son's renown? Do not then carry in your heart one fixed belief that what you say and nothing else is right. For he who thinks that he alone is wise, or that he has a tongue and mind no other has, will when laid open be found empty. However wise a man may be, it is no shame to learn, learn much, and not to be too firm. / You see along the streams in winter how many trees bend down and save their branches; while those that stand up stiff go trunk and all to ruin. So he who tightly draws his vessel's sheet and will not slack, upsets the boat and ends his course with benches upside down. Be yielding, then, and admit change. For if from me, though younger, an opinion be allowed, I count it best that man should be by nature wise. But if that cannot be, — and usually the scale does not incline so — then it is well to learn from good advisers. /

CHORUS

My lord, you ought, when Haemon speaks aright, to learn of him; and Haemon, you of him. For both have spoken well.

CREON

At our age shall we learn from one so young?

HAEMON

Only the truth. Young though I am, do not regard my years more than the facts.

CREON

The fact, you mean, of being gentle to the unruly.

HAEMON

I would not ask for gentleness to wicked persons.

CREON

But is not she tainted with some such ill?

HAEMON

With one accord the men of Thebes say no.

CREON

And shall the city tell me how to rule?

HAEMON

Surely you see how childish are such words!

CREON

Govern this land for others than myself?

HAEMON

No city is the property of one alone.

CREON

Is not the city reckoned his who rules?

HAEMON

Excellent ruling, — you alone, the land deserted!

CREON

He fights, it seems, the woman's battle.

HAEMON

If you are she. Indeed my care is all for you.

CREON

Perverted boy, pressing a cause against your father!

HAEMON

Because I see you causelessly do wrong.

CREON

Do I do wrong in reverencing my office?

HAEMON

It is not reverence to trample on the rights of gods.

CREON

A hateful heart that bends before a woman!

HAEMON

But never will you find me subservient to the base.

CREON

Why, all your argument is urged for her.

HAEMON

Yes, and for you and me, and for the gods below.

CREON

You shall not marry her this side the grave.

HAEMON

So then she dies; but if she dies, destroys another.

CREON

Will you assail me with your threats, audacious boy?

HAEMON

Is it a threat to combat silly schemes?

CREON

To your sorrow you shall teach, while yourself in need of teaching.

HAEMON

But that you are my father, I had counted you ill-taught.

CREON

Be a plaything for your mistress, but trifle not with me!

HAEMON

Will you then speak, and when you speak not listen?

CREON

And has it come to this? But, by Olympus, you shall not lightly heap reproach on insult. Bring me that piece of malice, straightway to die before my eyes in presence of her bridegroom!

HAEMON

Not in my presence. Do not think it! She shall not die while I am near. And you yourself shall see my face no more. Rave on then here with those who will submit! [*Exit.*]

CHORUS

My lord, the man is gone in angry haste. The spirit at his years bears sorrow hard.

CREON

Let him go forth to plan and do more than is in man's power; it shall not save these maidens from their doom.

CHORUS

So you will put them both to death?

CREON

Not her who had no finger in the business.
You say well.

CHORUS

And by what doom do you intend to slay the
other?

CREON

Leading her where the ways are clear of
humankind, I will shut her up alive in a stone
cell, allowing only so much food for expiation
that the whole city may escape the stain. And
if she calls upon the Grave, — the only god she
honors — she may obtain deliverance from death;
or else will learn, though late, that honor done
the Grave is labor lost. [*Exit.*

*Chorus IV**All-conquering Love*

CHORUS

O Love, resistless in thy warfare, Love that
fallest on thy bondmen, and lurkest in the soft
cheeks of a maid, thou roamst beyond the seas

and art in rustic cots. Ay, none of the immortals may escape thee, nor of mankind who perish in a day. Who harbors thee is frenzied.

Hearts of the just thou turnest into unjust, for their ruin. 'T is thou hast stirred betwixt these men this household war. Triumphant is the influence that flashes from the eyes of the desired bride. It ranks in power beside majestic law. Resistless in her mockery is goddess Aphrodite.

Ah, at this sight I too at last am carried beyond law, and can no longer hold the fountains of my tears when to that bridal chamber where all sleep alike I see Antigone hasting.

[*Enter ANTIGONE and Guards.*]

Episode IV

The lament of Antigone

ANTIGONE

Men of my land, you see me taking my last walk here, looking my last upon the sunshine — never more. No, Hades, who brings all to bed, leads me alive along the strand of Acheron, missing my part in wedding song. Never did bridal hymn hymn me. But I shall be the bride of Acheron.

CHORUS

And yet you will in glory and with praise pass to the secret places of the dead. Not smitten with slow disease, nor meeting the sword's portion, but self-possessed, alone among mankind you go to the Grave alive.

ANTIGONE

I have heard of the pitiful end of the stranger from Phrygia, the daughter of Tantalus, on Mount Sipylus; o'er whom like clinging ivy a rocky growth would creep, and from her wasting form the showers and snow, 't is said, are never absent, but drop upon her neck down from her weeping brows. Most like to her, God brings me to my rest.

CHORUS

Nay, nay! She was a god and sprung from gods. But we are mortals and of human birth. Yet for a mortal maid to win a godlike lot is high renown, whether one live or die.

ANTIGONE

Ah, I am mocked! Why, by our country's gods, taunt me when not yet gone but here before you? O thou my city, and ye great ones

of my city, thou spring of Dircé, and thou grove of charioted Thebes, I call on you to witness how all unwept of friends and by what cruel laws I go to that sepulchral mound for an unheard-of burial. Ah, poor me! Having no home with mankind or with corpses, with living or with dead!

CHORUS

Onward pressing to the utmost verge of daring, on the deep foundation stone of Right you fell, my child, — a grievous fall. A father's penalty you pay.

ANTIGONE

Ah, there you touched my bitterest pang, my father's thrice-told woe, and all the doom of the great line of Labdacus. Alas, the horrors of my mother's bed! And the embraces — his very self begetting — of that father and that hapless mother from whom I here, distracted, once was born! To them I go, accursed, unwedded, now to dwell. Alas for you, my brother, who made an ill-starred marriage and in your death stripped me, alive, of all.

CHORUS

In pious actions there is piety. Yet power, when his whose right it is, may nowise be transgressed. Your self-willed temper slew you.

ANTIGONE

Unwept, unfriended, with no bridal song, poor I am led along the appointed way. Never again that sacred ball of fire may I, alas! behold. Yet for my tearless lot not a friend grieves.

CREON

Do you not know that groans and dirges before death would never cease, were it allowed to voice them? Away with her forthwith! And when, as I commanded, you have shut her in the vaulted tomb, leave her alone in solitude, to die if so she must, or let her live her life prisoned in such a home. Thus we are clear of what befalls the maid. Only from dwelling in the light above shall she be hindered.

ANTIGONE

O grave! O bridal chamber! Hollow home, forever holding me! whither I go to join my own; for far the greater number Persephassa has received among the dead, all gone! Last of them I, and most unhappy far, now go below before I reach the limit of my life; yet going, dearly cherish it among my hopes to have my coming welcome to my father, welcome to you, my mother, welcome too to you, my brother.

When you all died, with my own hand I washed you, did you service, and poured libations at your graves. But, Polynices, for ministering to your corpse this is my recompense.

Rightly I honored you, the wise will think. Yet had I children, or were my husband mouldering in death, I might not in defiance of my townsmen have taken up the task. And wherefore so? I might have had another husband, had mine died, a child too by another man when I had lost my own; but mother and father hidden in the grave, there is no brother ever to be born. Yet when upon such grounds I held you first in honor, to Creon's eye I seemed to sin and to be over-bold, my brother dear. And now he leads me forth, a captive, deprived of bridal bed and song, — without experience of marriage or the rearing of a child, — that so poor I, cut off from friends but still alive, enter the caverned chambers of the dead.

What ordinance of heaven have I transgressed? Yet why in misery still look to gods or call on them for aid, when even this name of impious I got by piety! No, if such acts are pleasing to the gods, I may by suffering come to know my sin. But if these others rather sin, may they not suffer greater ill than they now wrongly wreak on me.

CHORUS

Still the same winds' same blasts of passion
sway her.

CREON

Therefore her guards shall smart for their
delay.

ANTIGONE

Ah me! The signal comes that death is
nigh!

CHORUS

I cannot bid you hope it will not follow.

ANTIGONE

O city in the land of Thebes! Home of my
fathers! And ye, ancestral gods! Men seize
me and I cannot stay. Behold, O lords of
Thebes, how I, last remnant of the royal line,
now suffer, and from whom — I who revered the
right.

[ANTIGONE *is led away.*]

*Chorus V**Other noble sufferers*

CHORUS

Even so was Danaë's beauty forced to change
the light of heaven for brass-barred halls, hid
and imprisoned in a tomblike bower. Yet was

she too of noble lineage — my child, my child ! — and was the keeper of the gold-showered seed of Zeus. But every force of fate is hard ; and neither wealth nor war, nor battlements, nor black ships beating through the waves, escape it.

Imprisoned too was the fierce-mettled son of Dryas, the king of the Edonians, confined by Dionysus for his abusive taunts within a rocky hold. There the dire force of frenzy ebbed away when at its height. He came to know the god whom he had madly touched with his abusive tongue. For he would stop the inspired women and the mystic fire and vex the fluting Muses.

By the Cyanian gulf's twin waters are headlands of the Bosphorus and inhospitable Thracian Salmydessus. Here Ares, the guardian of the land, saw a foul wound dealt the two sons of Phineus by his fierce wife, a blinding rancorous wound on their appealing eyeballs, struck by her bloody hands and shuttle's point.

And as they pined away, bitterly they bewailed their bitter lot in being born of one unblest in marriage. And yet she traced her lineage from the far family of Erechtheus, and grew up in the winding caves among the storms of Boreas, her father, and was herself as fleet as ever horse on

hilltop, a very child of gods. Still, upon her the everlasting Fates laid hold, my child.

[*Enter TIRESIAS and boy.*

Episode V

Tiresias

TIRESIAS

Elders of Thebes, with linked steps we are here, one using eyes for both. For this is the blind man's way of walking, in dependence on a guide.

CREON

What news, then, old Tiresias?

TIRESIAS

I will explain, and you shall heed the seer.

CREON

I never yet departed from your counsel.

TIRESIAS

That is the way to steer the State aright.

CREON

I have confessed the benefits received.

TIRESIAS

Beware once more! You walk on fortune's edge.

CREON

What means this? How I shudder at your words!

TIRESIAS

Hear and attend the tokens of my art. As I was sitting at my ancient post of divination, a place which is a haven for all kinds of birds, I heard an unaccustomed noise of birds screaming in harsh and jangling rage. And that they tore each other with fierce claws I knew, because the whirring of their wings told a plain tale. Forthwith in fear I tried an offering on the blazing altar, but from the sacrifice Hephaestus showed no flame. Upon the coals a clammy liquid from the thigh-bones oozed, and smoked and sputtered. The gall was spurted in the air, the wasted thighs protruded from their covering of fat. These failing signs of questionable rites I learned from the boy here, who serves me for a guide as I serve others.

Thus, then, the State suffers through your resolve. For all our altars and our hearths are fouled with carrion torn by birds and dogs from the poor fallen son of Oedipus. Therefore the

gods accept no more our sacrificial prayers and burning thigh-bones, nor do the birds whirl out well-omened sounds, since they have drunk the fattening blood of one who has been slain.

Think on these things, my son. All men will err. But having erred, no man is brainless or unblest who heals the ill he falls in and is not hard to move. Self-will shows dulness. Give way before the dead, and do not stab the fallen. What courage does it take to slay the dead anew? Kindly inclined, I tell you what is well. And easy is it to learn of a good counsellor who seeks to give us gain.

CREON

Old man, you all, like archers at a mark, bend bows at me. Even by your divinations I am not left untried. By the whole tribe of seers I have been bought and sold this many a day. Pursue your gains and barter me for Sardinian metal, if you will, or Indian gold, but never shall you get him buried. Not though the birds of Zeus shall seize their prey and bear it to his very throne, not even then will I, fearing pollution, sanction the burial. For well I know no man can bring pollution to the gods. But men can fall, aged Tiresias, great men can basely fall,

when plausibly they speak base words through love of gain.

TIRESIAS

Alas, who knows and who considers —

CREON

What? What is this all-including question?

TIRESIAS

How far the best of treasures is true wisdom!

CREON

As far, be sure, as folly is great harm.

TIRESIAS

Yet you are tainted with that very ill.

CREON

I will not bandy insults with a prophet.

TIRESIAS

And still you do, in saying I speak lies.

CREON

The prophet tribe was ever fond of gold.

TIRESIAS

And that of princes loves dishonorable gain.

CREON

Do you perceive that you address your masters?

TIRESIAS

I do. For through my aid you saved this city.

CREON

Wise in prophetic art, but loving evil!

TIRESIAS

You will goad me to declare my heart's dire secrets.

CREON

Out with them then! But do not speak for gain.

TIRESIAS

So shall it be, I think, — no gain for you.

CREON

Then do not seek to bargain with my purpose.

TIRESIAS

Nay, understand me rightly. Not many more swift courses of the sun shall you complete till one from your own loins you give to death in payment for the dead; for you have sent below one who should be above and cruelly shut within

the grave a living soul. Here too you keep a body cut off from the gods below, cut off from funeral rites, from piety. Which things rest not with you, nor with the gods above, but they by you are outraged. Wherefore long-gnawing avengers lie in wait, furies of Hades and the gods, that you be taken in the selfsame ills. Judge if I speak for gold. For, yet a little while, and wailings shall arise within your house from men and women. In hate of you all cities are astir in which these torn remains received their burial by dogs, wild beasts and winged birds, who bore the unholy stench up to the city's hearths.

Such arrows, for you vex me, like a bowman have I sent in wrath against your heart—arrows, too, sure, whose sting you cannot shun. Boy, lead me home, and let him vent his rage on younger men, or learn to keep a tongue more temperate and a better mind than now! [*Exeunt.*]

CHORUS

The man, my lord, has gone foretelling woe. And well I know since the first day I bound my hair—white now, which then was black—he never yet cried false against the city.

CREON

I know it too, and am confounded in my mind. To yield is hard, but to persist and bring a curse upon my life is harder still.

CHORUS

Son of Menoeceus, you must take good counsel.

CREON

What should I do, then? Speak, and I will heed.

CHORUS

Go, free the maiden from her caverned chamber, and give a grave to the unburied dead.

CREON

This you advise? You think I ought to yield?

CHORUS

Quickly as possible, my lord! For the swift-footed vengeance of the gods cuts short the wicked.

CREON

Ah, it is hard. But from my heart's desire I turn to do your bidding. I cannot fight with fate.

CHORUS

Go, do this now. Entrust it not to others.

CREON

Just as I am, I go. On, on, my servants, here and not here, take axes in your hands and haste to yonder height! And since my thoughts turn thither, I who bound her will be present to unbind. Truly I fear 't is best to spend our lives keeping established laws. [Exit.

*Chorus VI**Invocation of Bacchus*

CHORUS

O god of many names, joy of the Theban bride and child of Zeus the thunderer, thou who encirclest famous Italy, and rulest in the hospitable vales of Eleusinian Deo, — Bacchus, hail! Thou hast thy home in Thebes, the Bacchic mother city, beside the liquid waters of Ismenus, and where the savage dragon's teeth were sown.

Thee high on the twin rock the torch-flare sees, where the Corycian nymphs move as Bacchantes; thee, the spring of Castaly. The ivied slopes of the Nysaeon hills and that green vine-clad headland joins thy train, while hallowed voices shout to thee to guard the streets of Thebes.

Above all cities her thou honorest most, thou and thy mother whom the lightning slew. Now therefore, when with grievous sickness all our State is seized, come thou with healing tread over Parnassus' steep or by the moaning channel!

Hail, leader of fire-breathing stars, guardian of evening's voices, child of Zeus! Appear, O King, with all thy train of frantic women, who in their revels all night long dance to their lord, Iacchus. [*Enter a messenger.*

Episode VI

Overthrow of Creon's house

MESSENGER

Ye dwellers at the palace of Cadmus and Amphion, there is no human life, however placed, that I can praise or blame. For fortune raises, fortune overthrows, him who is now in good or evil fortune. No seer can tell the destinies of man. Creon was enviable once, I thought, through having saved this land of Cadmus from its foes. Winning full sovereignty he ruled the land, blest too in noble issue. Now all is gone. For when man parts with happiness, I count him not alive, but a mere breathing corpse. Let him have riches in his house, great riches if you will,

and live in royal state ; if happiness be absent, I would not pay a puff of smoke for all the rest, when weighed with joy.

CHORUS

What new disaster to our kings come you to tell ?

MESSENGER

Dead ! And the living caused the death.

CHORUS

Who is the slayer ? Who has fallen ? Speak !

MESSENGER

Haemon is gone. With violence his blood is shed.

CHORUS

What ? By his father's hand, or by his own ?

MESSENGER

His own, incensed against his father for the murder.

CHORUS

Ah, prophet, how precisely you fulfill your words !

MESSENGER

Since thus it is, to guard the rest is ours.

CHORUS

And lo, I see hapless Eurydice at hand, the wife of Creon, coming from the palace because she learned about her son, or else by chance.

EURYDICE

Good people all, I caught your words on coming forth to offer prayer to goddess Pallas. As I unbarred the fastenings of the door, to open it, the sound of my own sorrow strikes my ears. Backward I fall in horror into my handmaids' arms and swoon away. But tell again what the tale was, for I shall hear it not as one unused to ill.

MESSENGER

Dear lady, I was there and I will tell you, nor miss a single word of all the truth. Why should I try to soften matters which soon would prove me false? Truth is the straight course always. I followed with your husband as his guide to the high plain where, torn by dogs, uncared for still, lay the body of Polyñices. Here praying to the goddess of the crossways and to Pluto mercifully to restrain their wrath, we tenderly washed what parts remained and burned them all on fresh-plucked branches. We heaped a lofty mound of his own earth above, and so

departed to the stone-floored hollow bridal chamber of Hades and the maid.

Some one while yet afar heard cries of shrill lament resounding in the unconsecrated room, and came and told his master Creon. As the king then drew near, the uncertain sound of doleful voices met him. He groaned and uttered these despairing words: "Ah me, is my foreboding true? And do I travel the saddest road I ever trod? It is my son's voice greets me. Hasten, my servants, and when you reach the burial place pass through the opening of the vault where stones are loose up to its very mouth, and learn if it is Haemon's voice I hear or if the gods deceive me." Thus at the bidding of our downcast lord we made the search. The maid we found in the far corner of the tomb, suspended by the neck, held by a noose of woven linen; while he, clasping her waist and fallen forward, bewailed his ruined bridal, lost in death, his father's action, and his hapless love.

Now when his father spied him, he came to him with bitter sobs and, lifting up his voice, cried out: "Rash boy, what have you done? What thoughts possessed you? By what trouble were you crazed? Come forth, my child, I beg and pray!" But his son glared upon him with wild

eyes, spat in his face, and, answering nothing, drew his cross-hilted sword. He missed his father, who sprang aside and fled. Then the poor creature, angry with himself, bent over where he stood and pressed the sword to half its length into his side; yet in his feeble arm while sense remained he clasped the maid, and panting cast on her pale cheek quick puffs of bloody drops. Now lies he there, dead with the dead, getting his nuptial rites—alas!—in Hades' halls, and teaching all how the worst ill that falls on man is lack of wisdom.

[EURYDICE goes out.]

CHORUS

What may this mean? Our lady gone, and with no uttered word of good or ill!

MESSENGER

I too have fears, and yet I cherish hopes that, hearing this disaster of her son, she does not think it suitable to weep in public. Once beneath her roof, she will direct her maids to hold a private mourning. Her trained intelligence makes no mistake.

CHORUS

I am not sure. To me strained silence seems as ominous as loud vain cries.

MESSENGER

We will go in and learn if in her agitated heart she hides some secret purpose. For you are right. Excessive silence is a thing to fear.

[*Exit.*

CHORUS

But lo! Our lord himself draws near, bringing in his arms clear proof — if we may say so — of wrong not wrought by others but by his erring self. [*Enter CREON, bearing the body of HAEMON.*

*Chorus and Dialogue VII**Lament of Creon*

CREON

Alas, the sins of a presumptuous soul, stubborn and deadly! Ah, ye who see slayers and slain of kindred blood! Woe for my ill-starred plans! Alas, my boy, so young in life and young in sorrow! Woe! Woe! Thou, dead and gone? And by my folly, not thy own!

CHORUS

Ah me! It seems you see the right too late!

CREON

Unhappy I have learned it now. But then

some god possessed me, smote on my head a heavy blow, drove me along a brutish path, and so — alas! — o'erthrew my joy and trampled it. Woe, woe, for the wearisome works of man!

[*Enter a second messenger.*]

SECOND MESSENGER

My lord, 't is having and still getting. You bear one sorrow in your arms; enter the house, and there you soon shall see another.

CREON

What is there yet more sorrowful than this?

SECOND MESSENGER

The queen is dead, true mother of the dead here. Poor lady, she has fallen by wounds dealt even now.

CREON

Alas, alas! Insatiate gulf of death! Why, why thus cause my ruin? And cruel messenger, speeding my pain, what is the tale you tell? Why, one already dead you slay anew! What say you, boy? What tidings do you bring? Ah, must the slaughterous ending of my wife follow the death of him?

[*The Scene opens, and the body of EURYDICE is disclosed.*]

CHORUS

Here you may see! It shall be hid no longer.

CREON

Ah me! A fresh, a second grief poor I behold. What more has fate in waiting? Just now I took my child in my arms — alas! — and face to face behold another corse. Woe! Woe! unhappy mother! Woe, my child!

SECOND MESSENGER

Crazed, clinging to the altar, and closing her dark eyes, she first bemoaned the glorious grave of Megareus who died before, then this one's end; and with her last breath called down ill on you, the murderer of your children.

CREON

Alas! Alas! Fear thrills me. Will none strike home with two-edged sword? Poor I am steeped in sore distress.

SECOND MESSENGER

You were accused by her who died of causing both the deaths.

CREON

And by what sort of violence did she depart?

SECOND MESSENGER

Her own hand smote herself below the heart,
soon as she learned the lamentable ending of
her son.

CREON

Ah me! To no one else can this be shifted
from my guilty self. 'T was I indeed that killed
thee, wretched I! I say the truth, 't was I.
Take me, my servants, take me straightway
hence, to be no more than nothing.

CHORUS

Wise wishes these, if any way is wise in evil.
Briefest is best, when evil clogs our feet.

CREON

" Come, then, appear, fairest of fates that brings
my final day! O come, best boon, and let me
never see another day! "

CHORUS

Time will determine that. The present needs
our care. Let them whose right it is direct the
rest!

CREON

All I desire is summed up in that prayer.

CHORUS

Pray no more now. From his appointed woe
man cannot fly.

CREON

Then take away the useless man who by no
will of his killed thee, my child, and thee too
lying here. Alas poor me, who know not which
to look on, where to turn! All in my hands
was at cross purposes, and on my head fell
fate I could not guide.

CHORUS

Wisdom is far the greater part of peace. The
gods will have their dues. Large language,
bringing to the proud large chastisement, at
last brings wisdom.

NOTES

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THE numbers in the headline of the play, on the inner margin of the page, refer to the lines of the Greek text. Those prefixed to the following notes refer to the pages of the translation.

Page 29, bottom.

The tragedy of Oedipus is related by Homer, *Od.*, XI. 271. Ulysses relates how he went to the land of the dead, and what he saw there : "The mother of Oedipus I saw, fair Epicaste, (or Jocasta), who did a monstrous deed through ignorance of heart, in marrying her son. He, having slain his father, married her ; and soon the gods made the thing known to men. He at delightful Thebes in woe ruled over the Cadmaeans, through the gods' destroying purpose ; and she went down to Hades, the strong gaoler, fastening a fatal noose to the high rafter, abandoned to her grief. To him she left behind the many woes that the avengers of a mother cause to follow."

Page 36, bottom.

In this, the first utterance of the Chorus over the edict of Creon, the conflicting feelings are already manifest which leave both the Chorus and the spectator in perplexity throughout the play. The Chorus are shocked at the outrage to the body, but Creon's will is supreme and cannot rightfully be opposed. They differ from Creon, therefore, and think the indignities to Poly-nices unsuitable. But they differ from Antigone also, and know no higher law than obedience to authority. (Page 70, bottom.)

Page 37, middle.

Creon's readiness to imagine bribery is a large factor in his own undoing. Here he inclines to suspect the Chorus of taking bribes, soon he suspects the Watch, and later, Tiresias.

Page 56, bottom.

"O dearest Haemon!" The manuscript gives this line to Ismene, but it would have little meaning in her mouth. It and

the repeated allusions to marriage in the final lament (Episode IV.) are the only expressions of her affection for Haemon which the exalted and self-contained Antigone allows herself.

Page 67, middle.

In his edict Creon had announced that any one burying Poly-nices should be put to death by stoning. (Page 28.) He now shrinks from so violating the family tie, and feels that the direct killing of Antigone might bring a curse upon the city. He will therefore avoid violence, and merely allow the death to occur by process of nature. In this way he will not himself be culpable. (Page 71, middle.) That such fine distinctions have not altogether disappeared is evident from Schopenhauer's parallel argument in regard to suicide (*Die Welt als Wille*, Bk. IV., § 69), where he maintains that no good pessimist can justifiably take his own life by force; but that he may piously end his days by abstinence from food.

Page 69, middle.

The Phrygian princess, Niobe, married a king of Thebes, Amphion, and had by him six sons and six daughters. Homer gives the legend (Il., XXIV. 605), telling how "Apollo with his silver bow cut off the sons, and huntress Artemis the daughters, angry that Niobe compared herself to fair-cheeked Leto (their mother). For Niobe had said that Leto had but two, while she had many children. And so the two destroyed the many. For nine days they lay dead; none buried them. Zeus made the people stone. On the tenth day the gods themselves gave burial; and Niobe took food, weakened with weeping. Soon she was turned to stone on the bird-haunted peak of Sipylus, — the cradle of the nymphs, they say, who dance by Acheloös. Thus here in stone she broods forever on the woes the gods have sent."

Page 70, top.

Antigone pathetically bids farewell to the places around Thebes which are especially dear to her.

Page 70, bottom.

The "ill-starred marriage," here alluded to, is that of Poly-nices with Argeia, the daughter of the king of Argos. By it was brought about that league of the Seven Chieftains against Thebes, whose advance and rout forms the subject of one of the plays of Aeschylus, and whose overthrow is also sung in the first chorus of the present play. To this marriage all the subse-

quent disasters of Polynices and Antigone are here conceived as attributable.

Page 71, bottom.

Persephassa, or Persephone, the daughter of Demeter, was carried off by Pluto, and so became the queen of the underworld. She and the other "gods below" are in this play often contrasted with the "gods above."

Page 72, middle paragraph.

These lines have been the subject of much discussion, and have long been suspected of being an interpolation. Against them it may be said that they are out of keeping with the character of her who speaks. They are intellectual, calculating, not instinct with the spirit of self-sacrifice. That demand for burial on the part of the dead which has hitherto impelled Antigone, she everywhere else regards as a universal claim, and not as something merely applicable to irreplaceable relatives. One might infer from this passage that she buried her brother out of a sense of personal attachment rather than through devotion to the right. It is possible, too, to indicate the source from which the interpolation is derived. Herodotus (III. 119) tells the following story: On occasion of a breach of court etiquette, Darius sentenced to death all the male members of the family of Intaphernes, one of his great nobles. The wife of Intaphernes interceded. The king granted her the life of any one of the condemned whom she might choose. She chose her brother. The king reminded her that her children were nearer and her husband dearer. She acknowledged this, but said, "If heaven so wills, O King, some day may come another husband, and other children, too, if I lose these. But since my father and my mother are no more, no other brother ever can be born. This was my thought in asking for my brother." Darius judged the lady had spoken well, and being pleased, set free the eldest son beside the brother whom she asked, but put the rest to death." The resemblance between this passage and that of our text is striking.

On the other hand, the interpolation, if it be one, must have occurred very early. Aristotle (*Rhet.* III. 16, 9) quotes the two most obnoxious lines, only about a hundred years after the time at which they purport to have been written, attributing them to Sophocles. The disposition of Antigone to emphasize the promptings of the personal tie in the burial of Polynices,

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instead of the summons of universal right, may be thought not out of accord with her present tender and despairing mood. And whether the passage dramatically accords with her character or not, it thoroughly accords with what is more influential, — the character and taste of Sophocles, her creator. The liking for rhetoric and for intellectual ingenuity is as great a passion with him as it was with the youthful Shakspeare. That it was also deep in the temper of his time is shown by this very passage of Herodotus, and by those strange wit-combats of single lines (pages 63–66), in which the Attic stage, largely stimulated by Sophocles, delighted. On the whole, it seems to me that in this passage the rhetorical Sophocles got for the moment the better of the dramatic Sophocles. It will not do to strike out such parts of an ancient play as do not altogether harmonize with modern taste.

Page 73, middle.

The last words of Antigone.

Page 73, bottom.

Danaë was the daughter of Acrisius, King of Argos. Warned by an oracle — as was Laïus — that he should be slain by his grandson, Acrisius imprisoned Danaë in a brazen tower, where in a golden shower she was visited by Zeus. She bore Perseus, who by an accident killed Acrisius. The story has been charmingly rendered into English verse by William Morris, in his “Doom of King Acrisius.”

Page 74.

Lycurgus, king of the Edonians in Thrace, set himself against the new rites of Dionysus (or Bacchus), when these were introduced into Greece from the East. In consequence he was driven mad by Dionysus, and afterwards, at the bidding of Zeus, was immured in a cave on Mt. Pangæus.

Page 74.

Cleopatra, daughter of the wind-god, Boreas, married Phineus, king of Salmydessus in Thrace. Phineus put away Cleopatra and took another wife, who imprisoned Cleopatra herself and blinded her two sons.

Page 75, middle.

The seer Tiresias, endowed not with outer but with inner vision, is a favorite figure in Greek tragedy. He is first mentioned by Homer (*Od.*, X. 492) as already in the land of the dead. Athene bids Ulysses seek his advice: “Go to the halls

of Hades and of dread Persephone, there to consult the spirit of Tiresias of Thebes, — the prophet blind whose mind is steadfast still. To him, though dead, Persephone has granted reason, to him alone sound understanding. The rest are fitting shadows.”

Page 82, Chorus VI.

In this chorus Bacchus is called on both as a general deliverer from the power of death and as one who has a special affection for Thebes. In this city he was born, the child of Zeus and his “Theban bride,” Semele, — destroyed by the lightning which attended the visit of Zeus. Here his worship was first established and, spreading farther, connected itself with that of Apollo at Delphi and that of Demeter (Deo) at Eleusis. The “twin rock” refers to the two great rocks which overshadow Delphi and form the lower projection of Mt. Parnassus. In the third line of this chorus, where the manuscripts read “Italy,” some editors prefer “Icaria,” a township in northern Attica, where some of the earliest festivals in honor of Bacchus were held. The locality was identified in 1888 by members of the American School at Athens.

Page 85, bottom.

Why did not Creon follow the advice given him by the Chorus on page 81, and free Antigone before giving burial to Polynices? Or, if it was a part of the plan of Sophocles to let Antigone die, why did he not allow the rescuing party first to find her dead and afterwards to turn to Polynices? Because, as Professor Jebb admirably says, it would have produced an anti-climax in the narrative of the messenger. “Had the messenger’s speech first related the terrible scene in Antigone’s tomb and then passed on to the quiet obsequies of Polynices, the rhetorical impressiveness would have been destroyed. An Athenian audience would be keenly susceptible to the oratorical quality of that speech, while they would be either inattentive or very indulgent to the defect in point of dramatic consistency.”

Page 86, middle.

The ancient rock-hewn tombs, some of which are still visible in Greece, are ordinarily approached by a covered way, or passage, before the opening or “mouth” of the tomb is reached.

Page 90, middle.

Megareus was the elder brother of Haemon. His story is told in the *Phoenissae* of Euripides, though he is there called Me-

noceus. During the Argive siege of Thebes, Tiresias warned Creon that the Seven Chieftains could not be driven back until a man of Cadmaean blood should die. The Cadmaeans were the descendants of those warriors who sprang up after the sowing of the dragon's teeth. (Page 82.) Of the pure Cadmaean stock there remained only three, Creon and his two sons. Megareus sacrificed himself, so saving his father, his brother, and the city.



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